

The Edgemont Community Council, Inc.

Founded in 1947 to determine community opinion on civic matters and coordinate community action thereon and to plan and promote the general welfare of the community embraced within Union Free School District #6.

Post Office Box 1161

Scarsdale, New York 10583

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE EDGEMONT COMMUNITY COUNCIL

November 7, 2011

A meeting of the Board of Directors of the Edgemont Community Council, Inc. was held at the Edgemont Junior-Senior High School, November 7, 2011, in the faculty lounge. The following officers and directors were present: Geoff Loftus, Robin Schaffer, Jon Guttenberg, Gary Stern, Aubrey Graf-Daniels, Karen Kelly, John Coleman, Todd Garvelink, Marc Ackerman, Greg Adams, Matt Jaffe, Alec Clarke, Monica Sganga and Andrea Weiss.

Officers and Directors not in attendance Schuyler Kraus, Larry Rusoff, Jonathan Faust, Robert Bernstein and Robert Klerer.

The following Civic Associations were represented – Fort Hill(x), Edgemont Association(x), Longview(x), Southern Greenville(x), Cotswold (x), Greenridge (), Northern Greenville(), and Central Park Ave().

Guests/members – Michelle McNally, Peter Mellis, Arnold Laubich, Marty Payson, Dom Caratozzolo, Debbie Anders (Scarsdale Inquirer), Nick DeCicco.

Minutes – The October minutes were approved, with an amendment (moved and carried) that names not be mentioned in votes for or against any action items.

Treasurer's Report was presented by Mr. Adams, indicated 140 paid members and assets of \$4,462.80 as of 11/7/2011.

SBNC - Mr. Ackerman reported that the SBNC and ECC will send out a letter to all Edgemont residents, calling for nominations to the School Board and asking for people to get involved in the School Board Nominating process. Motion to approve funds, carried unanimously. Gerry Stoughton, current School Board president spoke (he is not seeking re-election) to the SBNC and discussed what he regarded as needed for board.

Town Affairs –

- A. Budget - Mr. Loftus passed out a summary of budget items, and also referenced Bob Bernstein's comments on our Facebook page. He commented on the following:

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The Cotswold Association
Edgemont Association
Fort Hill Association
Greenridge Association
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Northern Greenville Association
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1. Paul Feiner filed budget a day late, and accompanying letter two days late. While Mr. Feiner brags about a transparent government, the budget was not released to the public earlier. No public conversations regarding the budget took place. The tax rate will have increased from 2006 to 2012 by 51%. Michelle McNally added that the 2% cap applies to the tax levy, but property owners may see their taxes increase by more than 2%. \$1.8million will be taken from fund B balance.
2. 12 positions to be eliminated by layoff or attrition. This may change if unions agree to other givebacks. Part-time budget advisor to be hired (likely Arnold Hochberg), internal auditor to be hired.
3. No change with two recreation departments, still after school programs for one team. Still have a SWAT team, even though most places rely on County.
4. Large decreases in contingencies and insurance.
5. No discussion of capital budget.
6. Town Arts Budget to be covered by private grants (but unclear)
7. \$250,000 from sale of town property (not designated). Current year sales, as budgeted, have not yet occurred.
8. Exposure program budgeting quadruple in revenues.
9. Assumption that town will be able to use over \$300,000 in unclaimed tax revenue. Ms. McNally suggested that we obtain list of taxpayers involved.
10. Mr. Bernstein had indicated, in his summary, that without the mechanisms mentioned above, the rate increase would be about 8%.
11. No contingency for Fortress Bible; insurance company has indicated that their policy will not cover a judgment like this. The town may have to bond any settlement.

Arnold Laubich commented that the insurance may be adequate. Mr. Loftus indicated that the budget does not address systemic issues (two rec departments, the after school programs).

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RESOLVED, upon motion by Aubrey Graf-Daniels, second by Todd Garvelink that the ECC request that the town address budget issues. Geoff will circulate drafts for approval by board of a statement. [Post-meeting note: letter was circulated, approved and read to the Town Board at the board meeting on Nov. 9. That letter is attached to these minutes.]

- B. At the October meeting a Letter from ECC regarding revaluation was created and read to the Town Board.

Update on Village –Marc Ackerman said that the Committee - (Peter Mellis, Aubrey Graf – Daniels, Greg Adams and Marc Ackerman) is first investigating should incorporation be considered, updating EVEC analysis. Mr. Ackerman thinks it should be considered, in order to give local control, and does not think taxes would rise as much as the EVEC concluded. He thinks it should be considered now. There is risk in not considering it now. Mr. Ackerman discussed the following points:

- A. Governance (Greenburgh v. local village). Since 1940, 31 new villages have incorporated, 24 have dissolved. Edgemont is only 8% of town population, 16% of town outside, and is treated as irrelevant. As a village, we would have benefit of local control. Some might ask, do we have enough volunteers to function? The Fire and School Districts have sufficient people. We are larger than several villages in Greenburgh. People may be more energized if service is more meaningful. Ardsley has only Village Board and ZBA. Other villages have more.

- B. Provision of services (police, fire, ambulance). Village can control or join with neighboring municipalities to provide police. Currently all villages have mutual aid. Having option to create our own police will be a benefit. Consolidation would be less likely with a village and non-village fire districts. Street cleaning, etc. could be contracted out.

- C. Access to facilities – Town Pool and Parking at Hartsdale. Access to anything except Town Pool, and that if we chose to buy in. The Pool needs millions of dollars of renovation. It may be more viable to have our own pool. Parking issues – a large part of HPPD is in Edgemont. We should be able to negotiate a settlement.

- D. Zoning – incentive for village ZBA – Village has right to control. Notice and opportunity to comment. Issues – still subject to federal, state and local laws. Zoning can have an exclusionary purpose.

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E. Economics – EVEC thorough, thoughtful. But has not been redone or updated since 2005. Update needed. EVEC concluded that property taxes would increase 5%. Acquisition of municipal land for court and police and pools. Debt burden and reduction of taxable ratables. May not be necessary to acquire land short-term. Real estate market is different than it was in 2005. Unmoored from the Town of Greenburgh, the Village could negotiate better.

Mr. Laubich raised some concerns regarding the existing villages' history of taxation vs. the town's – felt that there is no way a new village of Edgemont could be more tax efficient. Both Mr. Ackerman and Greg Adams felt that since Edgemont would be a new village, without a history of legacy entanglements and a blank sheet to negotiate new contracts, etc., that a Village of Edgemont could do better than either the current villages or the town in containing tax increases.

Mr. Ackerman, with the support of the group, said he would continue with consideration of process.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:00.

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ATTACHMENT – LETTER TO THE TOWN BOARD RE: BUDGET

To the Town Board of Greenburgh,

November 9, 2011

The Edgemont Community Council (ECC) met on November 7, 2011 and voted to ask the Town Board to please reconsider the 2012 Budget – as proposed we believe this budget has some fundamental issues:

The 2012 Budget requires a \$1.8 million draw down from the fund balance to keep the increase in taxes down.

We would like to know the specifics and probability of the \$250,000 sale of town property, as a similar item for \$550,000 in the 2011 budget has not materialized. The 2012 Budget also assumes increases in revenues from rental fees but offers no explanation why these fees should more than double and triple.

The proposed Budget appears to inflate revenues by including hundreds of thousands of dollars in grant revenue for such items as conservation programs, a study of Hartsdale Avenue and community development, but with no corresponding expenditures required for these grants. Even if the town's contribution is zero, it must still spend the funds and that spending should be listed in the Budget.

The 2012 Budget calls for cuts in insurance. We remember when the town had to pay out a substantial sum when a tree killed a motorist on Central Avenue and the Town was under-insured. Also, the proposed Budget has substantial cuts in contingency lines which means the town may have to dip further into fund balance should anything unforeseen arise.

We believe the proposed Budget makes use of some questionable accounting approaches and assumptions instead of cutting costs and creating a reasonable fiscal path for Greenburgh's future. Instead, in this proposal, we still have:

- C. Redundant recreation departments with duplicative commissioners, staffs, facilities *and* costs.
- D. A Town-run after-school program when *every* school district already has its own program.
- E. A Town SWAT team when the county has one – no one else seems to feel the need of their own SWAT team.
- F. The budget calls for a few job cuts, but the budget message says the jobs will be restored if the unions agree to Town demands. Problem is, the budget seems to assume the unions will agree because there's no provision for any increase in wages.

The ECC calls upon the members of the Town Board to reject this Budget and go back to work – to produce a budget that will move Greenburgh into a healthy fiscal future.

Sincerely, Geoff Loftus
President, The Edgemont Community Council

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